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VISION 2030 AND THE ROLE OF *PUUSKAAT* FESTIVAL IN THE PRESERVATION AND TRANSMISSION OF MUSICAL ARTS EDUCATION IN MANGU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF PLATEAU STATE

Abstract

Similar to other ethnic groups in Plateau State, the Mwaghavul people are blessed with rich musical culture and tradition. However, the people are on the verge of losing their cultural and musical identity due to globalisation, acculturation and other external influences. Thus, this paper within the context of the vision 2030 examines the role of PuusKaat festival in the preservation and transmission of musical arts education in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State. The primary sources of information include oral interview and personal observation, while the secondary sources of information include literary materials from textbooks, journals and other written and non-written materials. The methodology employed in this paper is the descriptive method. The result of the findings revealed that the PuusKaat festival provides an avenue where young talented and aspiring musicians are encouraged, nurtured, sponsored and promoted in the production and performance of cultural music typical of the Mwaghavul tradition.

Keywords: Vision 2030, Role of “PuusKaat”, Festival, Preservation, Transmission, Musical Arts Education.

Introduction

Over the years, music and dance has been one of the major means of preservation and transmission of cultural and traditional heritage in Nigeria and Africa. Their performances are easily exhibited through the organization of cultural festivals where live and practical musical arts are performed from varied dimensions, unveiling and transmitting different kinds of musical arts and experiences in different forms.

Plateau state is a heterogeneous state, comprising about forty (40) ethnic groups (Vwambok, 2023). These ethnic groups are blessed with rich cultural and musical heritage typical of their ethnic tradition. This claim is confirmed by Jang, (2016) who asserted that the Jos Plateau is a highly multi-ethnic region, with a complex musical practice that provides intriguing correlate of ethnic and cultural history. However, globalization and changing trends in civilization exposed the state to external forces that influenced the originality of musical practices of Jos Plateau ethnic communities. Several types of music have disappeared especially with the missionaries

who opposed the practice of traditional religion and any form of music that accompanied it (Jang, 2016). Despite the effects of globalization on the traditional musical practices of the people, today, different significant cultural festivals across the diverse ethnic groups are still observed and this helps in maintaining some of these traditional music elements and practices (Blench, 2005).

Among these ethnic groups, the Mwaghavul people celebrates more cultural festivals compared with other ethnic groups in the state as different districts and villages always have different festival to celebrate at one time or the other. This is supported by Gubak, Kromtit and, Gubam (2019) who maintained that different festivals are also being celebrated in the various Districts before the *PuusKaat*. These include the *Yaghal-Wus* (Panyam), *Ryem* (Pushit), *Kopshu* (Ampang West), *Bwanzuhum* (Kerang), *Didiu* (Kombun) and *Puus Dar* (Mangun) among others. Similarly, Ndam, (2018) asserts that:

An informant with Chuktu Peter 4, analysed that that, Wus is held annually in January at Panyam, while Riyem is held annually in February at Pushit, Tidiu is staged annually in March at Kombun, Dileng is held annually in March at Kurgwam Primary School ground Bwai. Kwat-Alohom comes up, every March at SabonGari near Mangu Town. Mugo is held annually in March at Mangu Town. Kopshu is held annually in April at Ampang west. At the same time kopshu is celebrated at Dikibin. PuusTaal is celebrated at Bwonpe in April, Puus Dar comes up at Mangun in April, Veku Religious in April, PuusKwat, Chakfem is held at Chakfem Annually. Bwanzuhum based festivals is simultaneously celebrated annually in May at Kerang and Bwor. PuusKaatMwaghavul National Festival of Mwaghavul (FM) is celebrated annually in May in Mangu town. (pp 65-66).

The *PuusKaat* referred to as the mother of all festivals in the land is preceded by the celebration of all these festivals. According to Lohor, Katu, Lere and Danfulani (2011:153) ‘the festivals range from agricultural festivals, hunting festivals, circumcisions, and religious festivals to cultural dances’. The *Puuskaat* festival is the major traditional/cultural festival of the Mwaghavul people in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State. The festival is celebrated in April every year before the commencement of the rainy season. (Gubak, Kromtit and Gubam, 2019).

PuusKaat is the combination of two words; *Puus* (day) and *Kaat* (meeting). Therefore, *PuusKaat* literally means day of meeting (Gutul, 2024). The event usually features traditional music and dance from different groups made up of men, women, youths and children. It also features exhibition of different cultural materials or artifacts which reflect the ancient crafts of the people (Nguber, 2024). This view corroborates the assertion of Gubak, Kromtit and, Gubam (2019:289) that ‘Pus Kat’ literary means ‘Day of meeting’. It is actually a day that brings the whole Mwaghavul people both at home and in diaspora together.

The most important and interesting aspect of the *PuusKaat* festival currently is the fact that it is the only avenue where the rich cultural heritage of the Mwaghavul tradition is preserved, presented and promoted vis-a-vis music and dance. Apart from the entertainment role, music and dance has proved itself to be the most important tool in teaching the younger ones about their history, culture arts, science and technology, and who they really are (Nguber, 2024). They are not only vital for the transmission of Mwaghavul perceptions, ideals, aspirations and philosophy of life, but they also provide golden opportunities for all the people, male and females, the aged

and the young, to come together to preserve, promote and present their literary, as well as visual and performing arts (Ndam, 2018). This implies that every aspects of the Mwaghavul's education can be transmitted through costumes, musical instruments, lyrics and arts of performance among others.

Research Method and Sources of Data Collection

A descriptive method is employed in this study, thus both primary and secondary sources of data collection were used. The primary sources of information include oral interview and personal observation, while the secondary sources of information include data from textbooks, journals and other written and non-written materials. The custodians of Mwaghavul's culture, traditional rulers, elders and key stakeholders were interviewed, and the information gathered through oral interview and personal observation were reviewed and presented as narrated by the respondents.

Results and Discussion

Based on the objectives of this paper, the most relevant results from responses of the respondents are presented and discussed under the following sub-headings: the nature of *PuusKaat* festival, the role of music in *PuusKaat* festival, music/dance groups that perform at the *PuusKaat* festival, some common musical instruments used during the *PuusKaat* festival and their classifications, the costumes used at the *PuusKaat* festival and the role of "*PuusKaat*" festival in the preservation and transmission of Musical Arts Education in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State

Nature of the *PuusKaat* Festival

PuusKaatis the mother of the traditional festivals in Mwghavul land, Mangu Local Government Area Plateau State. The festival is usually organized in April every year to mark the end of dry season and usher in the rainy season (Vwambok, 2023). According to Diwus, (2024), '*PuusKaat* is a platform that unifies and bring all the Mwaghavul sons and daughters, both at home and in Diaspora together'. The festival is associated with specific rituals and prayers to seek God's blessings upon the land. (Linus Gutul), an elder statesman in Mangun District of Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State (verbal communication, February 7th, 2024) explained that it is a day usually set aside by the people to appease gods and ancestors. The *PuusKaat* in this case represents a moment of gratitude to God for protection throughout the year as well as offering prayers for a successful farming season. It is a festival showcasing different aspects of the cultural heritage of the people through music, dance, clothing, costumes, arts and crafts, folklore, royalty, traditional tools and technology, food, herbs, among others (Gubak, Kromtit and Gubam 2019).

Prior to the advent of colonialism, the *PuusKaat* festival was an avenue for an international trade where, goods were exchanged through barter trade or trade by barter. Usually, visitors were entertained by the people of the host community. It was an annual event and members of the host community used the opportunity to sell their goods, meet with their loved ones as well as opportunity for strengthening of relationships (D. Dagal, oral interview, March 14, 2024). The festival offers its visitors the opportunity to visit the variety of historical and cultural sites in the land such as the mythical "Dungyaa sacred groove", "Nlai", "Dagharkam", as well as the ancient

iron smelting sites scattered all over the land. It also affords the tourists opportunity to meet one of the most accommodating ethnic groups in the state (Gubak, Kromtit and Gubam 2019).

The festival also features the “Tan Luwek”—a kind of wrestling in which young men made robes from jute fiber and whipped each other. The robes give snappy sounds and cold hit hard. It is meant to test manhood and endurance where the brave young men could win love/hands of girls that might lead to marriage. Another interesting extra-musical activity that characterized the *PuusKaat* festival is the *sogho* (horse riding). It is a horse race competition among young men. Here, the winner could also win love/girls which could equally lead to marriage too (Vwambok 2023). The activities of the festival is normally organised between two to three days in order to accommodate relevant events that the festival is expected to cover. Visits to historical and tourist sites and the symposium are usually organised a day or two days before the actual festival.

The Role of Music in *PuusKaat* Festival

The festival usually features several musical performances to accompany and entertain the audience. Another important role of music at the *Puss Kaat* festival is that, the rituals and prayers, involved specific divinity, musical chanting and the use of a rattle in summoning the ancestral spirit. It is a festival showcasing different aspects of the cultural heritage of the people through music, dance, costumes, arts and crafts, folklore, royalty, traditional tools and technology, food, herbs, among others (Gubak, Kromtit and Gubam 2019). Other activities that are showcased during the festival include royal processions, exhibitions, competitions in traditional food processing, hunting expeditions and grand festival with Mwaghavul dances, traditional concerts as well as cultural performance of other ethnic groups within and outside the state.

One significant role music plays at the *PuusKaat* festival is expressed during the gala night usually organised on the eve of the festival. The primary activity done at the gala night is the Miss *PuusKaat* beauty contest. However, priority is always given to music; where different musical performances and talents are showcased at various points to entertain and add colours to the programme. Besides the entertainment role of music at the gala night, music and dance competition also takes place, and the winners of the competition are featured to perform at the festival and also awarded cash and other prizes (Sekrong Diwus oral interview, April 18, 2024). Other performances that are featured during the gala night as explained by (Kilingshak Gumwesh) the director of socials and culture, Mwaghavul Youth Movement (oral interview, April 19, 2024) include drama (stage performance), folktales and cooking competition of varieties of Mwaghavul dishes. Prizes are awarded to those who distinguished themselves in various events that are contested.

Music/Dance Groups that Perform at the *PuusKaat* Festival

There are varieties of dance groups that perform during the *PuusKaat* Festival. According to Ndam (2018), the Mwaghavul festival’s dance groups are categorized into four types, the vellang dance group, mat-cher dance group, Mbel dance group and the Jiraap dance group, each of these groups are categories according to their gender and age in sequential order. Similarly, Vwambok, (2011) categorized the Mwaghavul dance groups into five, as follows:

1. *Kwaraak*: Dance group for the aged men only.

2. *Nvelang*: Dance group for youths and men only.
3. *Jepbel*: Dance group for male children only.
4. *Mat cher*: Dance group for women only.
5. *Jirapcher*: Dance group for female children only.

The various dance performances that are associated with *PuusKaat* Festival include:

1. ***Nvwetlwang, nvelang or velang dance***: The *vwetlwang/velang* dance group is an instrumental male dance group named after the prominent instrument used by the group. The *nvwetlwang* is an earophonic instrument made from cornstalk. According to Lohor, Katu, Lere and Danfulani, (2011), the *velang* was exclusively a male cultural dance. The flutes were made of cornstalk or bamboo sticks of different sizes to give different tunes from bass voice (*ziik*) to the kind of normal voice tone.



Photo 1: The *nvwetlwang/velang/nvelang* dance group Mper, Kombun District of Mangu LGA, Plateau State

2. ***Bel* dance**: The *bel* dance group is also an instrumental male children dance group. It is also named after the instrument used. The *bel* is a single-tone flute, a member of the aerophone family.
3. ***Kwaraak* dance**: The *kwaraakis* also named after the instrument used. It is similar to the *nvwetlwang* but play on a lower tone and pitch compared to the *nvwetlwang*. This group from observation involved more aged men compared to the *nvwetlwang*.



Photo 2: The *kwaraak* dance group Mper, Kombun District of Mangu LGA, Plateau State

4. ***Sheer/ceer***: The *Sheer/ceer* is a female dance group. The *ceer* is a traditional musical instrument (Lohor, Katu, Lere and Danfulani, 2011).



Photo 3: The *mat-sheer* dance group Nyemlighit, Mangun District of Mangu LGA, Plateau State

5. ***NguNdeng-deng*:** *Ngundeng-deng* is a solo masculine instrumental performer. The instrument; *ndeng-deng* is a traditional pentatonic harp or a traditional pentatonic zither (*molo*) that is used during the *PuusKa*at festival to accompany songs of praise and songs of insult. The songs of praise are usually rendered to honour a war hero, farm hero, the winners of the *Tan-Luwek* (Wrestling) and the *sogho* (horse riding) competition. Similarly, songs of insult are rendered to mock lazy men and wayward individuals in the community and those who are known to have been involved in immoral behaviors.
6. ***Veer/feer* Dance:** This performance is also named after the instrument *veer* or *feer* (animal horn). The *veer/feer* is also used for solo performance to announce and introduce the arrival of the *Mishkagham* (King) or for group/ensemble performance (Vwambok, 2011).

Common musical instruments used during the *PuusKa*at Festival and their Classifications

The musical instruments used at the *PuusKa*at festival include aerophone, idiophone, membranophone and chodophone. Vwambok (2023) noted that the following instruments are commonly used during the *PuusKa*at festival:

1. Membranophones: *Ging-ging* (Traditional two headed drum). This drum is used by all the traditional music/dance groups who perform at the *PuusKa*at festival.



Photo 4:Ging-ging

2. Aerophones: *Nvwetlwang/velang/nvelang*, (corn stalk reed flute) *Bel* (single-tone flute), *Kwaraak*, (bamboo reed flute) and *Veer* (animals' horns).



Photo:7Veer

3. Idophones: *Shaa*, (guard rattle) *Ndol-Shaghal* (iron leg and hand bell) and *Ndol-Ngang* (leg bell).



Photo 9: Ndol-Shagal (Iron leg bell)



Photo 10: Ndol-Ngang



Photo 11: Shaa/Caa

Chordophone: The *ndeng-deng* is of two categories; *Ndeng-dengyangkas* and *ndeng-deng dang-ning*.

Nden-deng Yangkas (Traditional Pentatonic zither or *molo*) made from corn stalk and played with the fingers.



Photo 12:*Ndeng-dengYankas*

Ndeng-dengDangning (Traditional Harp) made from wood and donkey or cow tail and played with the finger.



Photo 13:*Ndeng-*

dengDangning

The Costumes Used at the *PuusKaat* Festival

The term costume is traditionally used to describe typical appropriate clothing for certain activities, such as horse riding costumes, swimming costumes, carnival costumes, festival costumes, ceremonial costumes, among many others, appropriate and acceptable costumes, and changes in fashion and local cultural norms. Costume plays significant roles during festivals, because they add to events' aesthetics. Such festivals provide opportunities where beautiful costumes of different ethnic groups are showcased in promoting the culture of the Mwaghavul.

The Mwaghavul of Mangu Plateau State of Nigeria engage in farming as their major occupation, they also practice weaving, pottery production, knitting, leather work, and blacksmithing among others. Some of the available Mwaghavul festival costumes are; mbum (cap), rasa (leather outfit), ndam, or shang (handbag), dakwal or bantidang (a shape of a triangular loin cloth outfit), chaa (calabash rattle), ndol-shagal, (metal rattle), ndol-nghang (palm fronds rattle), kim (brass armlet or bangles) nging (drum), feer (briggle) nnar (dance skirt) among others (Ndam, 2018).

This therefore means that the *Mwaghavul* costumes can be used to describe typical and appropriate clothing for the *PuusKaats* festival costumes. These costumes play vital role in the preservation and transmission of *Mwaghavul* culture.

In the light of the foregoing, P. Chucktu, (verbal interview, April 9, 2024) summed it up that the cultural festivals and costumes of the *Mwaghavul* play vital roles in the *Mwaghavul* society, like any other society in the quest to prevent their true cultural heritage from going into extinction. Here, each performing group has its own costumes that are peculiar to the group. According to Vwambok, (2011):

The *Nvelang* dance groups use *nnar, kulluk, dukwal or dakwal, ndolpiyem, dangning and nbantias* costumes for their performances. The *kwaraak* groups use *nbanti, nnar, kulluk, dang-ning, nbumandndol-sshaghal*. While the *jep-bel* groups use *nbanti, nnariandndol-pyem* for their performances. (p.81).

Ndam (2018) also asserts that:

The artistic items that make up the costumes of the people are; *mbum* (head gear), *dakwaltu-ghus* (triangular shaped loin outfit) on their shoulder, tanned leather loin outfit with vertical-strip as dance skirts (*rasa*), flute (*vellang*), sorted rattles, that is; leg and hand rattles (*ndolngangshee* and *ndolshaghalsar*), local drum (*nging*), bridle (*feer*), among others (p.69).

With regards to female groups' costumes, the *mat-sheer* or *mat-cheer* dance groups used *pinbwon/nukorntiit, dand-ning, seporkam sheer/cheer, goktip* and *kulluk* (Vwambok, 2011). The costume worn by the *Mwaghavul* people of Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State during recent festivals confirms that the culture of the people is declining. It is observed that some of the festival costumes have disappeared or altered as a result of modernization, religious influences and other external forces.

The Role of “*PuusKaats*” Festival in Enhancing the Achievement of Vision 2030 on the Preservation and Transmission of Musical Arts Education in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State

Vision 2030 encompassed prioritising the development of music education programmes, nurturing talents and promoting cultural heritage through music, thereby creating opportunities for young musicians to showcase their talents internationally vis-a-vis musical arts education. One positive element of the *PuusKaats* festival from the responses of the various categories of people interviewed is its ability to preserve, transmit and reveal the hidden treasures of the musical culture of the *Mwaghavul* people. In a verbal interview with, J. Ngufwat, a village head in Mangu District of Mangu L.G.A., he explained that, although globalization has eaten deep into the cultural affairs of the people, the *PuusKaats* festival remains the major force through which most of the cultural traditions of the people are being preserved and presented to the younger generation. John Ngufwat, said that in recent time, it is very rare to see live performance of traditional music at any occasion except during traditional festivals, especially the *PuusKaats* festival (John Gufwat), oral interview, May 2, 2024).

Another role of *PuusKaats* festival explained by respondents is that it gives the local artistes the opportunity to be present at the festival, thereby promoting their music and also provides an

avenue where young talented and aspiring musicians are encouraged, nurtured, sponsored and promoted in the production and performance of cultural music typical of the Mwaghavul tradition. The festival also serves as source of income to the artistes who are privileged to perform as they also receive donations from well-meaning individuals, corporate organizations, local and international industry. Aside performing at the *PuusKaat* festival, the event also exposes the artistes to wider audience where they are invited to perform at the *PuusKaat* festivals organised by the Mwaghavul people residing in other states and in Diaspora to perform. In an oral interview with a local artiste who is a beneficiary in this regard, he explained that after performing at the *PuusKaat* festival in 2016, he was privileged to be invited to perform at the *PuusKaat* festival Lagos Kano and Kaduna States in 2017- 2019 (J. Y. Jinang, verbal communication, April 16, 2024). This implies that the *PuusKaat* festival brings about new and hidden talented musicians, nurture them and promote their music career thereby adding to the development of musical arts among the Mwaghavul people.

Most of the people interviewed also explained that apart from churches, the only avenue where they enjoy live music performance is during the traditional festivals. According to them, virtually every ceremony they attend nowadays uses Dj music to entertain the programme. This implies that the *PuusKaat* festival provides an avenue where practical musicianship can be developed and encouraged thereby promoting the artistic and creative ability in the artistes.

The *PuusKaat* festival also serves as a forum for the Mwaghavul people to meet and display their culture. The festival as a whole could be a vital force in the revival of waning Mwaghavul cultural activities and in the acquisition of new skills which would enhance the development and healthy growth of Mwaghavul traditional music and other arts forms such as dancing, drama, arts and crafts and literature (P. J. Nyaghas, verbal communication, May 26, 2024).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Deducing from the responses of the people interviewed, it suffices to admit that the *PuusKaat* festival as a whole is a vital force in the revival of the waning Mwaghavul traditional music and in addition, its role in the acquisition of new creative skills, the preservation, transmission, development and healthy growth of the musical art education in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State is important. Thus, the paper recommends that government, through the Mangu Local Government Authority and the Mwaghavul traditional council ensure that the organisation of *PuusKaat* festival is promoted and sustained. The paper also suggests that the Mwaghavul's rich musical elements be prioritised as major elements that form part of the content of music education curriculum for learning in schools.

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